

# PROJECT HARVESTING

Seniors' third meeting at Kilingi-Nõmme Club House on the 25 March (subject: CHANGE)

The number of participants: 13

Our third meeting started with the review of the letter from Wijk aan Zee. We discussed the similarities and differences about the problems mentioned in the letter.

After that we discussed how the changes

- **to the social, political and economical frameworks have changed the life in Estonia.**

The current period in Estonia is the period of big changes, both political and economical. Since our second independence everything is being reformed. It is hard to keep track with the changes.

*Vaike, 'New ministers come and go too often and it seems that each of them wants to leave his mark. It doesn't matter whether good or bad. Too few farmers belong to the Parliament and that's why agriculture 'has been sunk'. Everyone reforms on paper but doesn't know what the real situation is like.'*

Generally people thought that agricultural small-scale production in the countryside doesn't work any more because of the European laws. Production of small farms is not bought because of the high cost of transportation. Only big enterprises get support from European funds and loans from the banks. Due to that young country people cannot find jobs close to their homes. Young families move to bigger towns, villages stop existing. A lot of land is left uncultivated.

*Eesi, 'Behind that is property reform. People wanted their (or their parents') property returned. After that market economy determined that small-scale production does not feed you. If a person had ambitions, he created a big enterprise which produces and develops. Without ambitions he only lives for European support.'*

*Kalle, 'During the Soviet times big state and collective farms lived with the help of state dotations. Electricity and fuel were cheap. Such way would have led to a quick bankruptcy in capitalistic society. During Soviet occupation we lived like canaries in a cage. We didn't have to worry whether we get food or starve to death – from time to time something was thrown into the cage and the order was given to sing. We sang a bit and got food. Now we've been let out of the cage, but we cannot sing nor find food. All we do is to whine about how bad everything is.'*

So it can be said that changing from one economical system to another has been the most painful for country people.

- **Family relations have changed.**

People cannot find jobs close to their homes and family relations suffer. Parents work far away from home, children are left on their own all day long. Parents even don't know what exactly their offsprings are dealing with, which Internet pages they visit, who they chat with.

Relations between a man and a woman are more tolerant in Estonia than in Wijk aan Zee, as one may conclude based on the facts presented in your letter. We have never had such laws about the rights of men and women. During the Soviet times it was enacted that a man and a woman are equal – these ideas still live on.

- **Freedom of speech. Why are people today dissatisfied with the government?**

*Maia, ' During the Soviet times media didn't publish anything negative about the government. Today even the smallest mistake made by the government is publicized . And people criticize. Back in those days nobody was allowed to criticize the government.'*

Everybody agreed that tabloids cross the line very often writing about the lives of celebrities. Older generation disapproves it – it's even not acceptable. But one has to agree: it is freedom of speech after all.

People gathered to the meeting were also worried about the worsening quality of the Estonian language used in media and elsewhere. We used to have a lot of Russian loan words in Estonian but now the world has widened. Journalists, young people as well as politicians take over words, phrases and idioms from other languages.

Our third meeting can be best summed up by Kalle's words: It's impossible to compare living in a cage to living in freedom.'